



By Richard D. Czerniawski

SO WHY DID WHAT HAPPEN, HAPPEN?

Harking back to my military aviation days some 50 years ago, each flight started with a briefing—what we were going to do and accomplish, and how we were going to go about doing it. Following the flight, we conducted a debrief—what we did correctly, what we failed to do correctly, what went wrong, and what we could have done better in achieving the mission objectives. The purpose of each debrief was to learn so we might improve future performance and avoid errors that could compromise our mission, our team, and our lives.

Too few marketers are conducting debriefs regarding the performance of initiatives. They do know if they're achieving their business objectives, but little beyond that, such as subordinate goals of what leads to the achievement of those supra-ordinate objectives—customer behaviors, awareness, the productivity of sales calls, return-on-investment, etc. Importantly, the managers of these brands do not know the "why" of the "what." So, there is no learning that might be applied to bolster success in the future. The result of not conducting debriefs is that we swim in ignorance, subjected to make the same costly mistakes and opportunity losses.

There are, undoubtedly, many reasons for not making debriefs a practice. Perhaps, the principal one that we do not take the time to identify what we need to achieve to realize our business goals. Specifically, what level of access or distribution, awareness, trial, message exposure, behavior objectives, etc., do we need to achieve? At what milestones? We need to establish a baseline of what we expect before we can conduct any analysis. A second credible reason is that everyone is so busy doing that there is little time for analyzing. We do one thing, and then the demands of the business or our managers propel us on to the next thing. Yet a third may be that to know the "why" may result in the pointing of fingers at functions or people for failing to achieve the brand's goals.

If we want our brands to grow to their potential expeditiously and efficiently, then we must learn and apply those learnings to future endeavors. This will require conducting thorough debriefs that are supported by qualitative and quantitative findings that address "why" what happened, happened.

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